



374972

341576

Rico Argentine

RECORD OF COMMUNICATION

December 3, 1993
9 am

Stan Powers
Bureau of Reclamation
Durango Colorado
(303)385-6555

*Pat Smith
Site Assessment
Manager*

MK had called the Bureau of Reclamation to ask for their data. They have done considerable study on the mercury in lakes issue for McPhee, Totten, and Narraguinnep. I had not even heard of the Totten mercury. Water, fish and sediment samples have been taken in the river and in these three lakes. Totten and Narraguinnep are off-river.

Mercury was found in the fish in all three reservoirs, but not in the fish in the Dolores River above the reservoirs. There was no mercury in fish downstream of McPhee. Lake analysis was of fish filets. He couldn't recall offhand, but he thought the river fish analysis was for whole fish or filets.

After all the samples they've collected, their theory is that the mercury is naturally occurring and that it isn't methylated and taken up by the fish until it reaches the lake (at least at McPhee). At Ridgeway reservoir, where mining and naturally occurring metals loading could take place (downstream of Idarado), they scraped the surface down to bedrock before creating the reservoir and have no problems with elevated concentrations in the fish.

One area of significant metals loading they found in their study was the Rico-Argentine area. He mentioned that tailings were used for street cover there, and after rains there were complaints of dying yards. Metals loading here included mercury. Silver Creek flows down from the Argentine. It is devoid of aquatic life. Above the mine is clean and there may be life up there. Rico gets its water supply from above the mine.

He'll send the raw data to MK for their SI. We both hoped it would replace our need to do further sampling for the McPhee SI.

ACTION:

Take the No Further Action flag off the Rico Argentine site.